

A

# REVIEW

OF THE

# STATE

OF THE

# BRITISH NATION.

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Thursday December 18 1707.

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**M**Any and great have been the Designs to discourage this Nation in the vigorous Prosecution of this War, and as little of a Prophet as I pretend to be, I foretold you it would be so; the Nature of the Cause, we are embark'd in, told us plainly it would be so, and the Nature of the Enemy, we are embark'd with, tells us so as plainly; no Stone shall be left unturn'd, no Art untry'd, no Season unimprov'd, no Malice unexerted, no Devil unemploy'd.

It is of the last Consequence to the *High-Church* Cause to divide and discourage us; without it they are all undone; their Party sunk, their Hopes vanish'd, their Cause ruin'd. Unhappy Party! whose Foundation is built, and whose Hopes are formed in the Differences and Confusions, the Heats

and Feuds, the Breaches and Disorders of their Country; that cannot hope but when honest Men despair, cannot rejoice, but when the Nation mourns; cannot sing, but when we sigh; upon what Foot can any Man wish Prosperity to such a People, he must turn Parricide to his Family, Traitor to his Prince, and Enemy to the Nation. Unhappy Party! that are deluded, no joy in such black Designs, and pretend to do GOD good Service, when they are acting upon Principles directly contrary to his Nature, Attributes, and all the customary Rules he is pleas'd to work by.

But above all, unhappy Creatures are these *High-Flyers*, who otherwise being some of them Gentlemen of Birth and Education, are so miserably debauch'd by the

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cessity of their Principles, that they can neither be good Subjects to their Prince, good Neighbours to one another, nor good Husbands to themselves; but being embark'd in a Cause absolutely declar'd to be contrary, either to Loyalty, Policy, or good Neighbourhood, espouse it so furiously, as to abandon them all for its Sake; whither can these Gentlemen be driving, and what can they be doing, but as far as in them lies, setting Fire to the Foundation of their native Country, and entailing Destruction upon their Posterity?

And unhappy is the Cause these People are embark'd in, that cannot be carry'd on but by the Bondage and Slavery of their Country, by the corrupting the very Principles of the People, and debauching Nature it self.

Let us examine a little how this Cause is now carrying on, and you will find all the Excentrick Motions imaginable at work in it, all the Steps which the Men of Darkness can take, and which the Arts of Hell can furnish; 'Tis carry'd with Trick and Fraud on one Hand, Pride and Envy on another, Rage and ungovern'd Passion on a Third, Forgery and Slander on a Fourth, and so on, till by the usual Degrees of all violent Undertakings it comes to detect it self, and proves abortive.

On one Hand spreading false News to discourage, on another ridiculous Hopes to deceive; here raising Slanders upon Persons, there upon things; here defending corrupt Principles, there corrupting weak Judgments, and all possible Methods to amuse and amaze us.

One spreads his Forgeries over the Nation in scandalous News, gives every thing a Turn to the Party, putting always a dark Side upon our Affairs, and relates always the worst of every thing; if the News be good, lessening it with Surmizes and Supposes; if bad, aggravating it with Additions and feigned Circumstances, as far as possible to render us desperate, and our Affairs in a worse Condition than they are.

And in this Case really the Infirmary of our People is remarkable; in that they seem pleas'd with melancholly Reports, and willing to have things made worse to them

than they are, that they appear gratify'd with the Phlegmatick Part, and love to be poring upon their Misfortunes, with the magnifying Glass of their own Hypochondriack Vapours; of these People I shall speak by themselves hereafter, but at present my Observations are not so much upon the Deluded, as upon the Deluders—These are fatal Enemies to our present Peace, Disturbers of the Nations Quiet, and too fatal Instruments in our present Discontent.

There cannot be a worse Method taken to ruin us than this, to raise the Murmurs of the People where they are quiet, and encrease them where they are already rais'd.

—Nor is there any thing tends more directly to this, than this unhappy Article of spreading false and invented Reports, to impose upon the Ignorance of the well-meaning but less intelligent People, or such as live remote from publick Affairs, and too much depend upon such Kind of Intelligence.

I could tell some melancholly Stories of our being impos'd upon in these things, but I'll tell you one of some Antiquity, in order to let you see, how far the ignorant may be made yet more so, only directing you to this Note; They that may be impos'd upon to believe, may be impos'd upon to act, and whither may the Consequences of that be carry'd?

In the Times of the Popish Plot, and when every Day gave us new Accounts and Discoveries of the hidden Mysteries of that yet not completely discover'd Contrivance of Hell and its Agents; Every Body's Business you may be sure, was to enquire what News, what News? It happen'd in a Publick House, where a Gentleman of my Acquaintance was staying for my coming to him, a poor honest Man comes in to enquire what News, between whom and my Friend began this short Dialogue.

A. The Man above-noted sits down at the publick Table, and began to the Master of the House with the Question of the Time—Neighbour, is there any News? Has any thing happen'd to Night? —Happen'd, says the Landlord, of what—Why any thing of the Plot? Any thing of the Popish?

B. M,



B. My Friend above, seeing him as simple as inquisitive, puts in.

B. Landlord, why do you not tell the honest Man the News that happen'd to Night?

A. Ay pray Sir, what is it—What is it?

B. Why Sir, have you not heard it?

A. Not I Sir, pray what is it, not I indeed Sir, I am but just come out to enquire, pray what is it?

B. You must needs have heard of it, Sir, why the Town rings of it.

A. Indeed not I Sir, pray go on.

B. Why, these Papists, these Papists, they'll never have done till they have ruin'd us all.

A. Ay truly Sir, I am afraid of it—But—What is it? what have they done now.

Thus he kept the Man eager and forward, and then it comes out by Degrees to enhance his Wonder.

B. Why, the French-Men that came up last Night—And then pauses.

A. Ay Sir, and so—Pray go on.

B. Why you must have heard of it, of the French-Men.

A. Indeed, Sir, I have heard nothing, pray go on.

B. Why six French-Men came up last Night and stole the Monument away, and but that the Watch stop'd them as they were going over the Bridge, and made them carry it back again, they might, for ought we know, have carry'd it over into France. These Papists will never have done!

A. Nay, now you are jesting with me; if you please to tell me the News, well and good; if not, you may find somebody else to make Sport with.

B. Indeed I do not jest, you may go and ask a hundred, they'll tell you the Story as well as I.

A. What do you tell me of a hundred or a thousand? if they tell me a thing that is impossible, I shall not believe them; this is impossible.

B. Prithee don't ask me News, if you won't believe it when 'tis told you, and when 'tis vouch'd by all the Town; and for being impossible, I find, you know nothing of what can be done in the World; did you never hear of Archimedes, that

wanted but one Point to fix his Engine upon, and he would have removed the whole Globe.

In this Nick of Time I came in and another Person, B. turns readily to one Person that came in; here says he, this Man won't believe the Story of the six French Men that stole the Monument away last Night, and he is grown so positive, forsooth, that he pretends it cannot be done; the Man presently taking the Story just right, as it was, replies, yes, yes done, German Clock-Work will do more than that; but why does he not go to the Monument, and see, if he can get at it for the Crowd, what a Number of Workmen are there setting it fast, that it may not be stole again?

A. Turns to the Gentleman, why are you serious, Sir, is such a thing possible?

No doubt of it, says the ready Voucher of the Sham.

WELL, says the poor Innocent, such a Thing may be it seems, but 'tis very unlikely—And so goes away really believing the Story.

This, Gentlemen, sho' an odd Tale, I assure you, I was Witness to my self, and the Moral of the Story is plain; If there are People in the World that may be thus imposed upon, how may the common People in England be imposed upon in the obscure Points of High-Flying and Low-Flying, Toleration, Moderation, Persecution, and zealous Adhering, &c!

To spread false and scandalous Reports, therefore, is a most fatal Profession; and at this Time of Day, as it is one of the most approved Methods of the warm People of this Age, so it is one of the things which the wiser Heads of the Nation ought to guard against; it is not for me to dictate to the Wisdom of the Nation which is now sitting, but were the Gentlemen of the House of Commons to see, but what scandalous Accounts are given all over England of the publick Affairs of the World, nay and sometimes of their own Proceedings, they would certainly find out some Way to suppress Clandestine News—The Authors of which are a Sort of Spies, who always raise an ill Report upon the Land, and weaken the Hands of the Nations Friends.



I confess, we are a Nation willing to be deluded, willing to be imposed upon, and nothing is so absurd, but we are pleas'd with it, rather than not have some News; and this encourages the Wretches that do it to the last Degree.

Could we describe the Absurdities that are put upon the ignorant People, how they are made believe things, as gross as the Story of the *French Men* and the Monument, it would amaze some People, and they would hardly believe it possible; *Scotland* is a famous Instance of this—Where the poor People were perswaded to believe, that by the Union they would be all undone—That they should have no Salt, no Beer, nor no Bread; that the Men should have no Work, nay and which was worse, that the poor Ladies should go a begging for Husbands.

The zealous, honest, poor People were made believe, their Church was to fall into the Tyranny of the Bishops; and they must all come to the Service Book; nay the very Ministers and Parliament Men were abused in the same Manner; the *first* were told, they should be oblig'd to take absolute and uninterpreted Oaths, and the *last* that they must take the Sacrament of the Church of *England*, before they could be admitted into the Parliament House.

Now, tho' these things were all ridiculously absurd, and palpably false in Fact, yet to make a short Application, to what Distractions did these scandalous Reports bring that poor Country! How near to Blood and Destruction did it come, purely by the Assistance of these worst Sort of Incendiaries!—Let any that is ignorant of the fatal Consequence of spreading false News, reflect upon the Time of that famous Treaty—And see, what unhappy Success this Practice had there, and what End they were calculated for.

The same miserable Design is no doubt the Case in *England* at this Time, and how far the Spreading false News, and giving remote Glosses and ill-natur'd Suggestions to things, on purpose to amuse the People, contributes to our general Distraction, I leave to every wise Man's consideration.

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